



THE TWO FACES OF MANAGEMENT THE JANUS FACTOR

The central theme to be argued in this book is that managerial action comprises simultaneously both *rational* and *irrational* qualities. It will also be suggested that the borderline between these two (ir)rationalities is both ambiguous and haphazard. Rational managerial actions are sometimes classified as irrational, and irrational actions as rational. This duality in managerial action is illustrated here with the classical *Janus* metaphor, the famous double face.

- Chapter 1 (*Managing the Unknown*) sets the scene by focusing on the fundamental problem of uncertainty that faces all managers. Two modes for dealing with this are discussed: the *intraindividual* and the *interindividual* or *interactional*. The first of these offers five possible paths to follow, and the second offers four. Some of these paths are associated with rational human actions, others with what are described as ‘irrationalities’. Finally, the *Janus metaphor* is introduced to illustrate how these seemingly incompatible qualities are intermingled in managerial practice.

- Chapter 2 (*Challenging Managerial Rationality*) explores the concept of rationality in some depth, looking also at certain ingredients previously neglected. The hypothesis is introduced that managers, like people in general, are *multirational* rather than *monorational* actors.

- Chapter 3 (*Does the Manager Manage?*) raises the fundamental question as to whether it is possible at all for managers to organize individuals around a common (strategic) purpose. It is suggested that organizations do not resemble hierarchies so much as ‘holarchies’, that is to say collections of simultaneously integrated *and* autonomous individuals. It is concluded from this that managing such holarchies only provide managers with the possibility to contribute to *temporary and quasi-co-ordinated strategic paths*.

- Chapter 4 (*The Many Faces of Strategy*) focuses on the managerial challenge that is most profoundly imbued with uncertainty, namely that of establishing a path into an unknown future. Path-finding of this kind is often referred to as the management of strategy, as it emerges from the managers’ *active presence in a network of interactions*. The crucial strategic role for management here is to *try to strengthen some configurations of norms and actions, and to weaken others*, while at the same time deploying resources of various kinds.

- Chapter 5 (*The Iggesund Contest*) describes an extensive empirical study of a hostile takeover process, with a view to illustrating and underpinning the theories introduced in Chapters 1–4. Particular attention is paid to the *Janusian character* of strategic processes, and the *limits to managerial discretion*, as well as to the links between individual and organizational strategies.

- Chapter 6 (*The Janus of Management*) introduces some rather unusual empirical sources such as managers’ memoirs and autobiographies, to illustrate the *duality of managerial action*, that is to say, the *simultaneous presence in such action of rationality and ‘irrationality’*. In this final chapter the focus shifts away from the organization and towards the individual. In a concluding comment we return to the *Janusian quality of management* and summarize some of its main attributes.

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